R E P O R T  R E S U M E S

ED 013 107 JC 670 821

CLASSROOM TESTING PRACTICES IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE.

BY- ALTSHULER, THELMA C.
CALIFORNIA UNIV., LOS ANGELES

PUB DATE SEP 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.24 6P.

DESCRIPTORS- *JUNIOR COLLEGES, *RESEARCH REVIEWS (PUBLICATIONS), *ACHIEVEMENT TESTS, ESSAY TESTS, STANDARDIZED TESTS, OBJECTIVE TESTS, EVALUATION, ITEM ANALYSIS, ERIC,

ON THE BASIS OF A REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS IN THE ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE INFORMATION, THE AUTHOR CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF CLASSROOM TESTS IN JUNIOR COLLEGES. SHE SUGGESTS THE NEED FOR INTERCHANGE OF IDEAS AND REPORTS OF PRACTICES, AND CITES AS EXAMPLES REPORTS IN THE CLEARINGHOUSE COLLECTION DEALING WITH (1) USE OF MACHINE GRADED TESTS, (2) ITEM ANALYSIS AS A DETERMINANT OF TEST VALIDITY, (3) USE OF STANDARDIZED TESTS, (4) USE OF ESSAY EXAMINATIONS, AND (5) THE RELATIONSHIP OF OBJECTIVES TO EFFECTIVE TESTING. A BIBLIOGRAPHY IS INCLUDED. (WO)

ERIC

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH INFORMATION CENTER ERIC

UCLA CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE INFORMATION

Volume 2, Number 1

JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW

September, 1967

A periodical review of research reports received and processed at the Clearinghouse for Junior College Information

ED013107

# CLASSROOM TESTING PRACTICES IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

For the junior college student, the part of the course which is a vital concern is also the part about which surprisingly little research has been done — the uses, administration, and evaluation of the classroom test. Students know that the test, in large measure, determines the grade. No matter how often they may be told to relax and enjoy a lecture or discussion for its own sake, they cannot obey. The test (or tests) must be faced. Experienced teachers capitalize on this student awareness of the importance of the test as motivation. A faculty axiom states, "When you want to be sure of their attention, mention the test."

Considering its importance, there is need for more information on the function of the classroom test in the junior college. The Clearinghouse has many accounts of the use of tests for screening and placement at registration; and there are follow-up studies of graduates. But there is not yet sufficient information on the testing of course content as a measure of learning.

Although most teachers would undoubtedly agree that they want to retain the right to do their own testing when and as they like, many of them would probably be interested in learning about the experiences of other teachers in situations comparable to their own. This is particularly true for many teachers who face large classes in which machine-graded testing would seem to be more efficient if it could be used to implement the purpose of the course. These teachers would welcome sound innovations separated from rumor and hunch — innovations suggested by their counterparts in other schools and adaptable in similar courses anywhere.

One such experience is recounted by an instructor at Riverside (Calif.) City College (JC 660-494). By the use of regular machine-graded class tests he is able to test comprehension and encourage students to keep up with reading assignments in a political science course. Data processing "remembers" previous performance, and scoring is on a cumulative basis. Item analysis is to him an aid in evaluation of test questions.

Item analysis also proved useful for tests given in eight large lecture classes, as reported in a pilot study by the Research Office of the Orange Coast Junior College District (JC 660-264). Item difficulty and discrimination and the power of incorrect answers to distract students were determined. In addition to the summary table for each course, the study included copies of the detailed reports to instructors.

Continued testing after placement in a program is a recommendation of the *Modesto Multi-occupational Project Research Report No. 3* (JC 670-019). The report also stresses the importance of the apparent or "face value" of a test in terms that the student can understand. Dealing specifically with the California Achievement Test, the report deals generally with testing, noting that there needs to be an obvious relationship between material on the test and the material which is being taught in the classroom.

JC 670 821

Time as a factor causing anxiety is noted, with the recommendation that tests be untimed. Careful wording of the test and avoidance of clerical error are also important.

An institution with a continued interest in the test process is, of course, the Educational Testing Service, which reports that the standardized test is used more widely in initial placement than in teaching and evaluating within the classroom. According to a recent survey of 63 junior colleges (JC 660-296), locally constructed essay-type examinations are most popular. The respondents felt that published standardized tests have limited use because they do not relate closely enough to the content of a specific course. Data on the kinds of standardized tests used, the purposes of using each kind of test, the specific tests used, testing needs and problems, and attitudes toward testing are summarized in the report for both public and independent junior colleges. Among the conclusions was the need to support development of new tests to meet newly defined measurable objectives.

A part of the curriculum which has relied more on essays than on quick-score tests is English composition and literature. According to a survey conducted by the National Council of Teachers of English, *English in the Two-Year College* (JC 660-224), an essay examination is used for evaluation of students in 18 percent of the schools at the end of the first semester and in 14.4 percent at the end of the second.[1] However, standardized tests, as part of a departmental final, also aid in evaluation.

In a recent paper given at a professional meeting, Alan C. Purves, of the Educational Testing Service, pointed out the need for precision about what it is that teachers want students to do with literature before it is possible to test for achievement in the course (JC 670-399). He remarked that "the skills of classification, like the skills of recall and recognition, are easy to teach and easier to test," but the more difficult kind of testing is on the next order of behaviors. "Teachers want students to be willing to read good literature and to enjoy the literary experience . . . and curricular statements frequently refer to them as vague hopes rather than as specific outcomes of education in literature." He goes on to say that testing organizations *can* test for the achievements that teachers believe to be important.

Testing for important goals is difficult but worthwhile. Many junior college teachers have surely felt the disappointment of looking at tests which do not reflect the student interest that the teacher had felt was present during class. The brightest-looking, most responsive students missed questions which the instructor had thought were among the easiest, the most obvious, as he had made up the test.

However, once the test is looked upon as a way of measuring objectives clearly stated to the student in advance, the confusion begins to clear. The student has been notified as to course goals and objectives. He has been given specific instructions of what to look for, what is important. He can read with these emphases in view. The instructor recognizes as he constructs the test that not all questions test for the same things. Dif-

ferent questions test reading, attendance, application of terms, response, writing ability.

"Sampling," i.e., giving different questions to different students in order to test learning achieved by the class as a whole, can also be profitably undertaken.[2] Pretests illustrating course emphasis and item format may be helpful. What should *not* be a part of the test process is evaluation of the student's ability to outguess the instructor, though probably the students with the highest grades in college have always possessed that skill to some degree.

It seems likely that certain areas heretofore tested by essay examination alone can be tested by the imaginative construction of machine-scored tests -- once the purpose of each part of the test is clearly designated. With tests an important part of the evaluation of both teacher and student and with grades so vital an evidence of success, there seems to be a clear-cut need for more interest in the construction of good tests and for better reporting of test practices in junior college classrooms.

Perhaps a reason for the relatively small number of studies of this problem is that both test and course material are faculty prerogatives, as junior college faculty do not typically report on their procedures. Nonetheless, some of these basic questions must be answered:

Given the variety of course content and methods of instruction, is meaningful research possible?

How often is testing done? Do some courses or subjects tend to have fewer tests than others?

For what purpose are tests given?

Is the giving of retests for poor performance a general practice?

Are test questions mainly recall of content?

What is the policy for allowing students to make up a test missed because of excused absence?

How might experts in test construction aid teachers in designing more effective tests?

Do tests really assess achievement of course goals?

These are potentially fruitful areas for research in the junior college.

*Thelma C. Altshuler*

[1]P. 49.

[2]Lee J. Cronbach, "Course Improvement through Evaluation," *Teachers College Record*, 64: 678-682, 1963.

Abstracts of documents processed in the ERIC system may be found in *Research in Education*, a publication of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. *Research in Education* may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. (Single copy, $1.00; annual subscription of 12 issues, $11.00.)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY


**JC 660-224**
*English in the Two-Year College*, National Council of Teachers of English. Champaign, Ill. 1965.

**JC 660-264**
*Item Analysis of Classroom Tests; A Pilot Study.* Orange Coast Junior College District, Costa Mesa, Calif. 1964.

**JC 660-296**
*Testing Practices and Problems in Junior Colleges — A Survey*, by Dean W. Seibel. Educational Testing Service, Evaluation and Advisory Service, Princeton, N.J. 1966.

**JC 660-494**
*Computer Techniques for Weekly Multiple-Choice Testing*, by David Broyles. Riverside City College, Riverside, Calif. 1966.

**JC 670-019**
*Analysis of the Testing Program — MTDA Project.* Modesto Junior College, Multi-occupational Project, Modesto, Calif. 1965.

**JC 670-399**
*What Is Achievement in Literature?* by Alan C. Purves. Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J. 1967.



## CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGE INFORMATION

Arthur M. Cohen, Director — Lorraine Mathies, Associate Director

Advisory Board

*A. ROBERT DE HART*
Chairman, Committee on Research & Development
California Junior College Association

*EDMUND J. GLEAZER*
Executive Director
American Association of Junior Colleges

*ROBERT M. HAYES*
Professor, School of Library Service, UCLA
Director, Institute of Library Research

*B. LAMAR JOHNSON*
Professor of Higher Education, UCLA

*THOMAS B. MERSON*
Research Director
California Junior College Association

*C. ROBERT PACE*
Professor of Higher Education, UCLA

*H. LEE SWANSON*
Dean of Instruction
Division of Communications
El Camino College

*ROBERT VOSPER*
University Librarian, UCLA

The Clearinghouse operates under contract with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education.



JUNIOR COLLEGE RESEARCH REVIEW
Arthur M. Cohen, Editor
Clearinghouse for Junior College Information
Room 96, Powell Library
University of California
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90024

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.
PERMIT NO. 12378



UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

SEP 7 1967

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION